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TAGS: [PREL](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL MEETING WITH AUSTRIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: ECON/POL Couns Dean Yap. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (U) On Thanksgiving Day, Amb. McCaw had an hour-long one-on-one farewell call with FonMin Plassnik. The following is based on the readout provided to CDA Kilner.

Annapolis

[¶2.](#) (C) At the time of the meeting, Austria had not yet been invited to the Annapolis MEPP conference. Plassnik touched only lightly on the subject, noting that GOA non-participation would "be hard to explain to the Austrian people," but wishing the U.S. well. She said that Austria would do its best to be supportive of any follow-up efforts. She renewed the offer of Vienna as a venue for any working group meetings that might emerge from Annapolis. Interestingly, Plassnik drew a connection with Austria's six-month limitation on its Chad deployment, claiming that the GoA wanted to retain the flexibility to contribute to any peacekeeping mission that might flow out of a post-Annapolis agreement.

Afghanistan

[¶3.](#) (C) Plassnik indicated that she had given some thought to organizing a "Women in Afghanistan" conference, similar to previous Vienna events focused on the Middle East and Serbia/Kosovo. Beyond that, however, she foresaw no increase in Austrian engagement in Afghanistan. Austria's priorities lay in the Balkans and Middle East, rather than South Asia.

Relations with Secretary Rice

[¶4.](#) (C) Plassnik spoke at length about her extremely high regard for Secretary Rice, leaving no doubt that she believes she has a particularly good personal bond with the Secretary. To illustrate the point, she recalled that one evening during this fall's UNGA, the Secretary had spontaneously asked seven other Foreign Ministers, Plassnik included, to join her for a very casual and informal dinner. Plassnik described it as a fantastic evening, which made a huge impression on her.

Press Statement

[¶5.](#) (U) Unusually, Plassnik issued a press statement after the meeting, in which she praised both the Ambassador and the importance of trans-Atlantic relations. The statement included praise for America's historic role in Europe, but focused on the present. She said, inter alia: "America is an important partner with much credibility in the Balkans." "Close trans-Atlantic cooperation on the basis of equality is a necessary element of efforts to find sustainable solutions in international crisis regions," notably the Middle East,

despite "different emphases, for example regarding Iran."
The statement stressed that Europeans should not allow their
view of America to be limited to a single factor, but "must
see the totality of our manifold and developed relations."

Ambassador's Comment

16. (C) Plassnik appears to worship Secretary Rice. If we
ever get into a serious stand-off with the Austrians on an
issue of high concern, a phone call from the Secretary to
Plassnik would probably be the highest card we could play.
Kilner